

A LIVINGSTON COUNTY SCRAPBOOK

(1855-1975)

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Chapter IV

Livingston County High Schools

"Hail, Hail to _____ High!
All hail to the Purple and White,
Hail, hail to _____ High,
For you we are ready to fight.
Ever grateful, ever true
Thus we raise our songs anew
Of the days we spent with you,--
All Hail, All Hail to you."
--High School Loyalty Song

In 1855, instruction ordinarily did not go beyond the eighth grade, but the 1855 Free School Law had the effect of putting the private academies, which had provided added training, out of business.

One of these academies was the New Michigan Academy, which was established in Newtown Township in 1856. It was thought, at that time, that an East-West railroad was going through the area, but, when coal was discovered at Streator, New Michigan Academy faded away.

E. B. Neville was in charge of the academy for a year; it was idle for two years; then O. F. Pearre took charge in 1859 and, for three years, the school prospered. When Pearre then became principal of the Dwight Schools, the academy died.

In 1872, a state law gave voters the right to set up township high schools and to levy taxes for their support. Still, high schools were available only to children of the more financially able districts. In 1903, a law created non-high school districts which were obligated to pay tuition of rural children who wished to go to the established high schools in the county. This territory, called Non-High School District No. 310 in Livingston County, levied a tax and paid tuition for the high school students in the non-high area to attend the high schools of their choice. Since the tax rate in the Non-High School District was lower than that in the high school districts, voters were reluctant to have the territory attached to existing high school districts. Nevertheless, in 1944 state law required that all non-high territory in the county be placed in high school districts on the basis of the pattern of attendance of the non-high school students in each area.

High Schools

In 1917, many children continued to study in outmoded schoolhouses, but the trend in teaching methods was increasingly progressive. In the cities, boys and girls were encouraged to attend the vocational schools or to train in high school for specific trades or vocations. The courses taught in the classical high schools were being attacked as being outworn and useless by some. Classes in homemaking for girls were introduced. "Shop" became the most interesting activity in school for many boys. By the mid-twenties the average boy or girl was beginning to consider college

education a right. But colleges had entrance requirements which tended to be classical or academic, so our high schools embraced both movements.

In the 1930's the WPA was employed in the construction of many public buildings including high schools. The National Youth Administration (NYA) was organized in 1935 within the WPA to provide job opportunities for persons between 16 and 24 years of age. Some of these young people were employed in the high school libraries, offices, etc.

Once again in 1942 we were at war and Victory Gardens sprang up across the country in the drive to produce more food. Even schools had their Victory Gardens.

In January, 1942, Congress authorized rationing goods, control of prices, and freezing of house rents by the Office of Price Administration. Rationing of automobile tires and gasoline, sugar, and coffee was required. Schools and school administrators were appointed in Livingston County to issue ration books and stamps. Men were being drafted so high schools found themselves short of male teachers. It was not until the 1960's that this trend was reversed.

Following the war the vast increase in population made heavy demands on the schools. Communities everywhere entered into extensive building programs.

Dates on which high school districts in the county were established are as follows:

Pontiac Township High School	1894
Fairbury Township High School	1914-1915
Dwight Township High School	1915-1916
Forrest Township High School	1915-1916
Chatsworth Township High School	1916-1917
Saunemin Township High School	1916-1917
Cornell Community High School	1921-1922
Long Point High School	1924-1925
Cullom Community High School	1929-1930
Flanagan Township High School	1940-1941
Odell Community High School	1945-1946

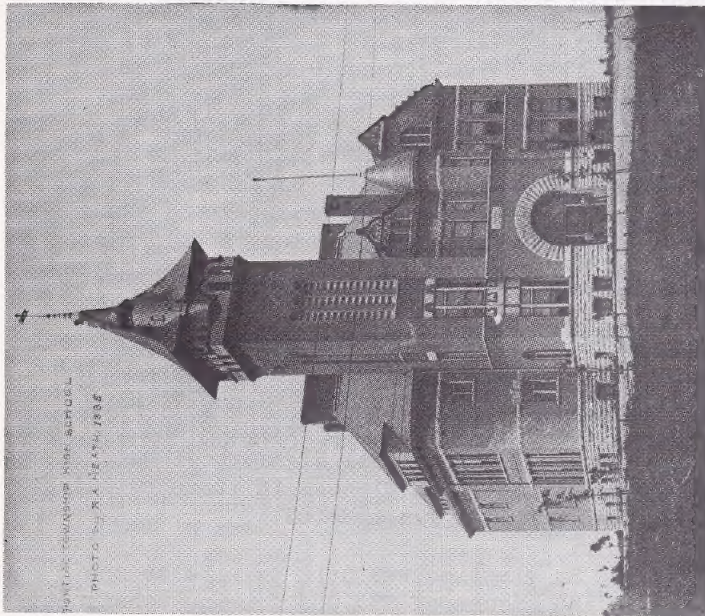
Pontiac High School

Pontiac had the first four-year high school in the County.

The present Pontiac Township High School building is the third to be built in Pontiac. The first called City High School (See Chapter III) was erected in 1879 on the site of the present Central School. High School classes were held on the second floor of the building and the first floor housed the grade school classes. City High School was destroyed by fire in 1893, and students attended classes in store buildings throughout the city until another building was erected.

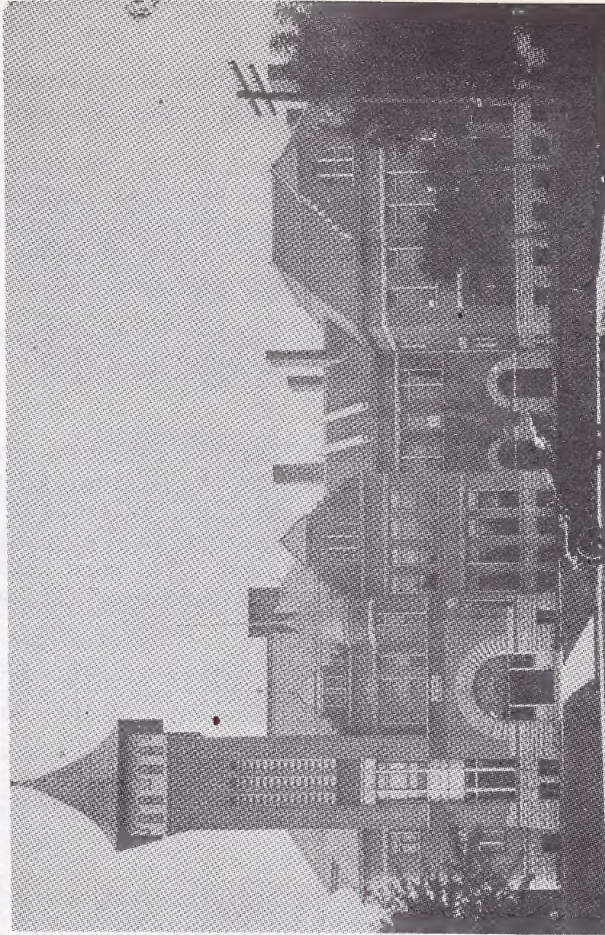
On Saturday, June 10, 1893, an election was held to vote on the proposition of issuing bonds in the amount of \$30,000 for the construction

Pontiac Township High School



PONTIAC TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL — R. A. Heath took this photo of the original high school building in 1895.

FIRST PONTIAC HIGH SCHOOL — The first high school in Pontiac was located at the north end of town in an area devoid of trees and shrubbery. First school was built in 1894 at a cost of about \$30,000. The school was open to students from other areas than just Pontiac. Two other additions were added to the above structure over the years. Winston Churchill College took over the building pictured and additions when the new Pontiac High School was erected three years ago at the east end of Indiana Ave.



PONTIAC TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL — The Pontiac Township High School was organized in 1894 and school opened in September of that year. The original value of the building and grounds was about \$30,000, to which additions have been made totaling \$20,000. The building shown in the photo was used by the high school and later Winston Churchill College and was demolished recently. The enrollment in 1894-95 was 231 with 97 boys and 134 girls. The photo is from the 1909 History of Livingston County.



FIRST PTHS GRADUATING CLASS — There were 24 members in the first graduating class from Pontiac High School. Left to right, back row: Archie Armstrong, Ellis McGregor, Wilbur Tuesburg, May Park, Robert Beach, Clement Bell and Frank Johnson; second row: Lida Armstrong, Superintendent J. E. Bangs, Barbara Young, Harriet Townsend, Jessie Mc-

Conaha, Eva May Long, Georgia Lish, Mary E. Thompson and Lula Gaymann; front row, Lula Moots, Eva Andrews, Arthur Taylor, Eugenia Sims, Mabelle Wallace, Guy Whitson and Amalia Gaus. Not pictured but in the class were Burton Orr and George Mallory. — (Picture loaned by David Umsted.)



Four Pontiac Township High School students, Mae Greenebaum Campbell, an unidentified woman, Georgia Lish Whitson, and Mary Thompson McGregor, pose in front of the old high school building. The girls were in school between 1894 and 1897.

Two school men who served
Livingston County Schools
for many years retiring---
Perce Donnell, President of the
Board of Education of P. T. H. S..
and A. C. Watson, Superintendent of P. T. H. S..
and earlier Superintendent of the Fairbury Schools



of a new high school building. The proposal carried and the Babcock site was chosen for the new school. This building was later to become the site of Winston Churchill College and after its demise was to be demolished and the site to be used for the present Winston Hill Apartments.

The first high school board of education consisted of R. R. Wallace, President; James A. Hoover, Secretary; Chas. H. Tuesburg, George B. Gray, and W. F. Cook, members.

The new school opened in the fall of 1894 with a faculty of four teachers and an enrollment of 231--97 boys and 134 girls. J. E. Bangs was the first principal, C. E. DeButts, assistant principal. On the faculty in later years were such well-known teachers as Margaret Power, Cora M. Hamilton, Amanda Hubbard, Emma A. Barry, Ada E. Herbert, W. W. McCulloch, George W. Dowrie, Lloyd Dancey, and Helen Mar Scouller. The name of J. E. Bangs is one that appears often in the early history of Livingston County schools. In 1902, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, P. I. Bayliss, offered Mr. Bangs the position of assistant state superintendent of public instruction. Professor C. E. Butts, formerly of the Fairbury Schools, then accepted the position at Pontiac made vacant by Mr. Bang's resignation. The first Commencement was held in the spring of 1895 with two graduates, Josephine McCalla and R. Bruce Campbell.

Pontiac High School was the eighth township high school to be organized in the state of Illinois. The curriculum consisted of a Classical and Latin scientific course, each for four years; and a business course and a teacher's normal course, each for two years. From the two-year course many went out to teach in the schools of the county. The annual cost of operation in 1898 was reported to be \$10,000. The school soon attracted a large number of students from neighboring towns, many of whom boarded with local residents and paid tuition of \$30.00 per year.

In 1905 and 1906, remodeling and additions were made at a cost of \$25,000. The gymnasium, with a seating capacity of 1,200 and a stage, was constructed in 1923 at a total cost of \$105,000. In 1931, a connection between the old and new buildings was added at a cost of \$2,500. After the original tower was struck by lightning and repaired, its style was changed slightly. As the enrollment grew, the assembly room, which was part of the 1905 construction, was changed into library stacks and three classrooms. Other additions to the school were made in 1937 and 1954 bringing the total cost of the structure to over \$167,000.

In 1965, after the district had built its third high school, the old building was converted into Winston Churchill Junior College. The college opened its doors in 1966 after extensive remodeling of parts of the structure. The end of the college in 1971 marked the end of the building's educational career. Jean A. McCoy and Sons bought the old building, demolished it in 1972, and built town houses on the site.

Dwight High School

The first Dwight High School was built on the east side of town in 1897 at a cost of \$25,000, and served as both an elementary school and a